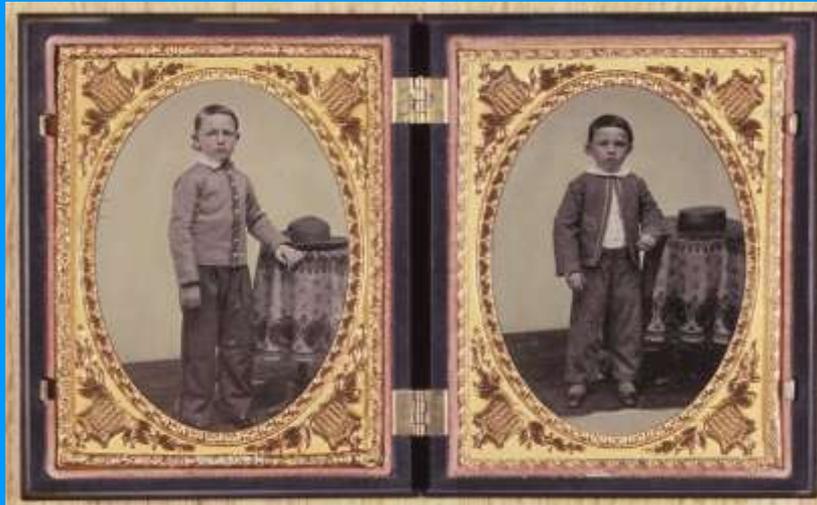




IDENTIFICATION, CARE, & STORAGE OF PHOTOGRAPHS IN ARCHIVES

Megan K. Friedel, Archivist
Alaska State Historic Records Advisory Board
training
June 14, 2011

Identifying Photographs: Early Photo Processes



- **Daguerreotypes:** image on silver-coated copper, stored in case, available 1840-late 1850s
- **Ambrotypes:** collodion-nitrate image on glass, stored in case, popular 1852-1860, available until 1881
- **Tintypes:** image on iron coated with lacquer, either cased or loose, popular 1856-early 1900s

Identifying Photographs: Card Photographs



Popular 1859-1900s. Usually made by mounting **albumen prints** on cardstock. Common types are:

- Cartes de visite (2.5 x 4 in, produced 1859-1900s)
- Cabinet cards (4.5 x 6.5 in, produced 1866-1900s)
- Stereographs (3.5 x 7 to 5 x 7 in, produced 1857-1900s)

Identifying Photographs: Other Common Photo Types



CYANOTYPES

Paper sensitized with iron-salt solution that produces blue pigments when exposed to light.

Made by exposing glass-plate negative to image in sunlight.

Identifying Photographs: Other Common Photo Types



EARLY KODAK PRINTS

Kodak No. 1 camera introduced in 1888. Prints made by No. 1 and No. 2 cameras around circular.



PHOTO POSTCARDS

Began being produced in U.S. in 1906

Identifying Photographs: Significant Color Processes

Autochrome: 1st commercially successful color process, introduced in 1907 and available until 1955

Kodachrome: introduced in 1936 as 35mm film, Kodachrome slides available beginning in 1941

Instant color film: Introduced by Polaroid in 1963



Identifying Photographs: Modern Photographs



GELATIN SILVER PRINT

Introduced in the 1870s and still used today!



INKJET PRINT

Generated by computer printers, which spray tiny droplets of ink into image pattern.

Identifying Photographs: Glass Photographs & Negatives



LANTERN SLIDES

Introduced in 1849, used through 1920s. Positive image on glass, often hand-colored. Often used for lectures and in classrooms.



GLASS-PLATE NEGATIVES

- Collodion wet-plate negatives: used 1871-1880s
- Gelatin dry-plate negatives: used 1880-1920s

Identifying Photographs: Film Negatives

NITRATE NEGATIVES

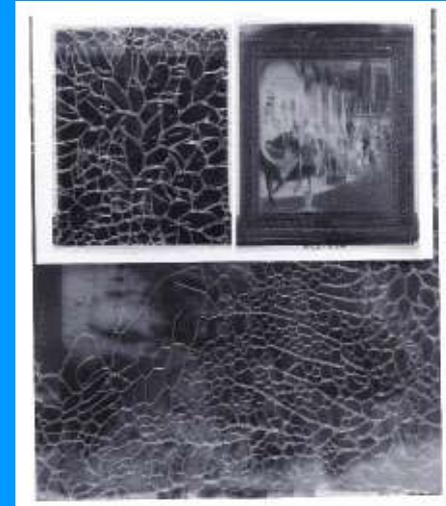
- Made between 1887-early 1950s
- Highly flammable!!!
- Identify by **edge printing**, **material type**, or **deterioration**
- Main characteristics of **deterioration**: negatives that have turned amber-colored and are beginning to stick to one another or surrounding material OR have degenerated into brown powder



Identifying Photographs: Film Negatives

ACETATE "SAFETY" NEGATIVES

- Began to replace nitrate negatives in 1937 & used almost exclusively by 1951
- Replaced by polyester negatives in 1980s
- Identify by **edge printing** or **deterioration**
- Main characteristics of **deterioration**: negatives curl, warp, bubble, or crack, become brittle, and/or smell like vinegar





Other Hints for Identifying & Dating Photographs

First, try to identify the photo process to give yourself a date range. Then use any of the following clues:

- Clothing and hair styles
 - Automobile models
 - License plates
 - Photographer's imprint on mount or back of photo
 - Street signs, prominent buildings, building or business names
 - Landscape features (rivers, mountains, coast-lines, etc.)
 - Material culture
-



Other Resources for Identifying & Dating Photographs

Camera Workers: The British Columbia, Alaska, & Yukon Photographic Directory, 1858-1950: <http://members.shaw.ca/bchistorian/cw1858-1950.html>

University of Washington Pacific Northwest Photographers Database:
<http://db.lib.washington.edu/pnwphotographers/>

Candace Waugaman list of Alaska photographers (see hand-out)

City directories and phone books

James K. Fox. *License Plates of the United States: A Pictorial History 1903 to the Present.* New York: Interstate Directory Publishing Company, 1994.



Bad Storage Conditions for Photos

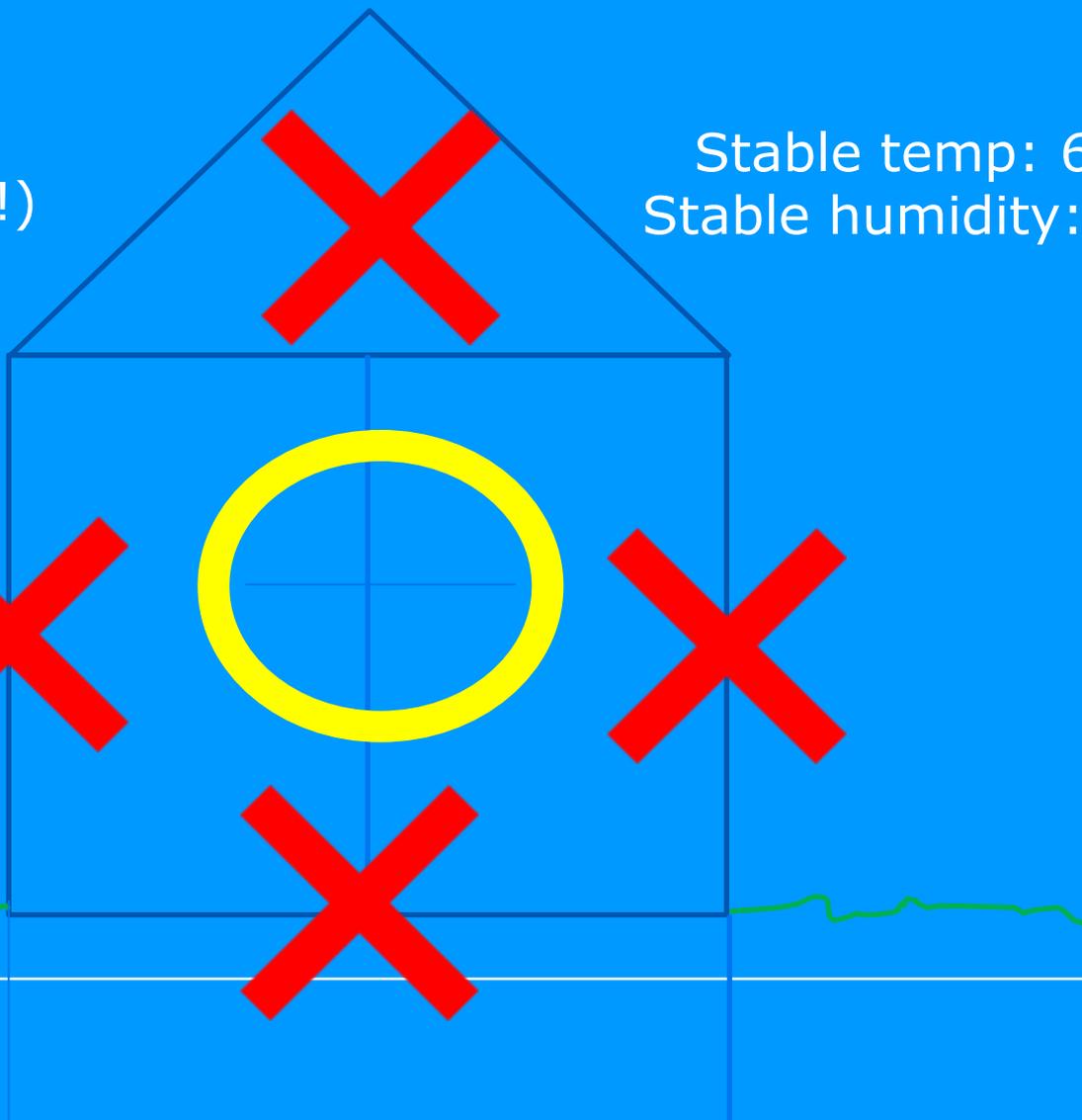
- ❖ High temperature
- ❖ High humidity
- ❖ Big swings in temperature/humidity
- ❖ Lots of light, dirt, and/or dust
- ❖ Mold or mildew growth
- ❖ Near heaters, washers, water pipes, copy machines, food, drinks, or plants
- ❖ Exposure to pollutants or chemicals

NO GARAGES AND USUALLY NO BASEMENTS OR ATTICS

Good Storage Conditions for Photos

Store on metal shelves (not wood!) on interior walls

Stable temp: 66-68 F
Stable humidity: 35-50%



Acid-free boxes



Acid-free folders



Do not use if stored in moist environment!

Envelopes?

Must be acid-free
and pass P.A.T.

Available in buffered and
unbuffered

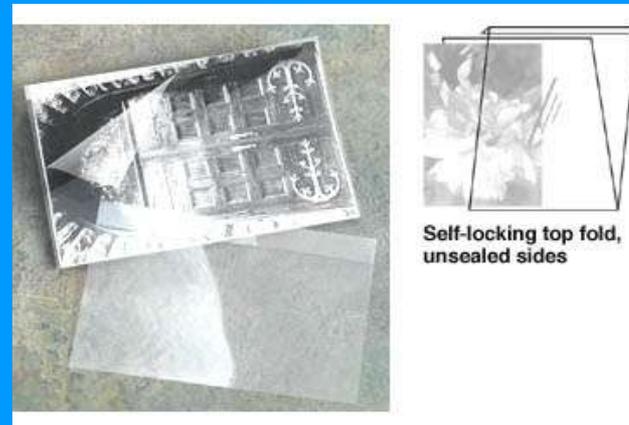
DO NOT USE glassine or
Kraft paper envelopes



Sleeves?

GOOD SLEEVES: Mylar,
polypropylene, polyethylene

BAD SLEEVES: polyvinyl
chloride (PVC)





Handling Photos: No!



Handling Photos: Yes!



White cotton
gloves



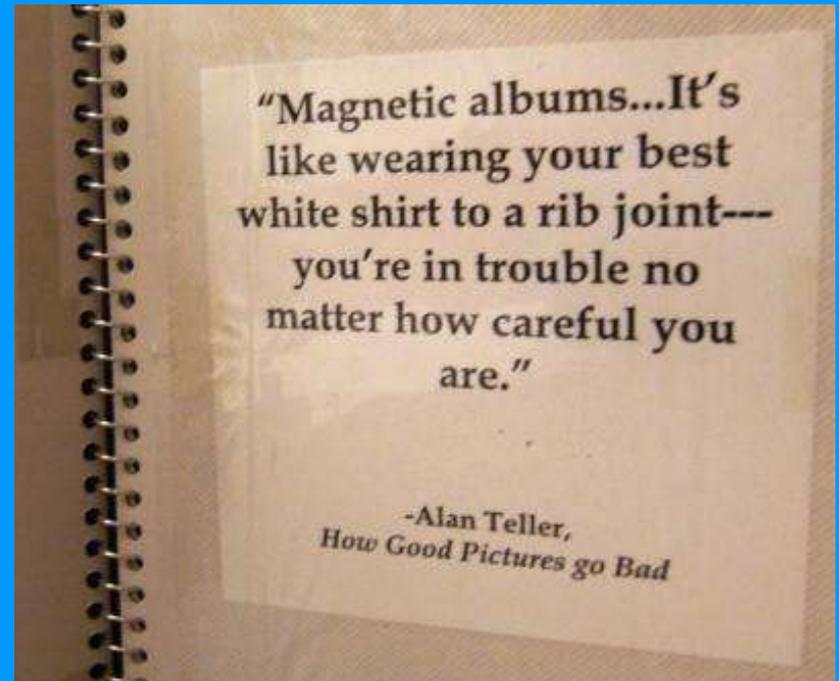
Pencils, No. 2 or softer
(I prefer 4B pencils)

Can I store photos in albums?

Use albums that have:

- ❖ Acid-free, lignin-free paper
- ❖ PVC-free plastic

...and remember...



Caring for photos already in scrapbooks or albums



General rule of thumb:
Don't take them apart!



Interleave with
acid-free tissue
paper

Storage & Care for Specific Photo Formats

EARLY PHOTOGRAPHIC PROCESSES

- Store cased photographs flat in a small oversize box or upright in acid-free envelopes inside a “pamphlet” box.
- Do not remove photographs from cases.
- Loose tintypes: store in acid-free envelopes.
- Mark outside of box as “Glass” or “Fragile”.



Storage & Care for Specific Photo Formats

ROLLED PHOTOGRAPHS

Store "as is" in acid-free poster tube or box.



SLIDES

Do not store in slide carousel.
Store in acid-free slide boxes or PVC-free sleeves.

Storage & Care for Specific Photo Formats

GLASS NEGATIVES, POSITIVES, & LANTERN SLIDES

Store each in acid-free envelope or 4-flap enclosure & put in appropriate-sized acid-free box.

Mark outside of box as "Glass".





Storage & Care for Specific Photo Formats

NITRATE NEGATIVES

- Separate from other archival material.
- DO NOT make prints or scans from negatives.
- Best storage is cold storage, in separate acid-free envelopes and in acid-free boxes. Do not store multiple negatives in one envelope.

ACETATE "SAFETY" NEGATIVES

- Store each in acid-free paper envelope, store envelopes in acid-free boxes
- Consider making prints or scans to preserve image
- Do not store multiple negatives in one envelope

POLYESTER NEGATIVES

- Can be stored in 3-ring or loose polypropylene negative sleeves or acid-free envelopes
- Do not store multiple negatives in one sleeve or envelope

Can I Conserve My Photograph Myself?

Short answer: NO!

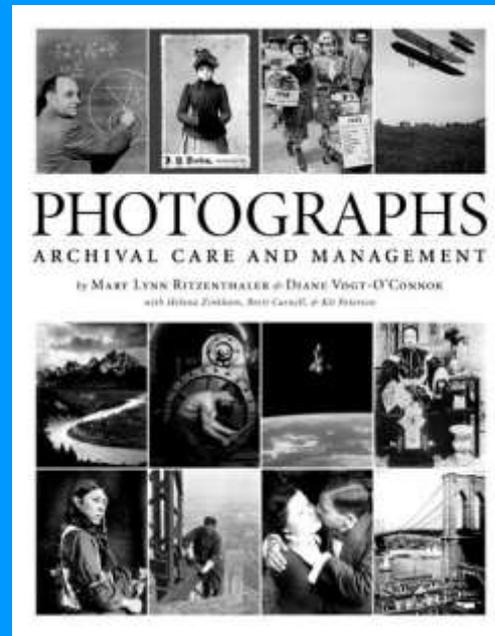
Do not use de-acidifying sprays, tape, glue, or any other method to “repair” a photograph. Your goal is to **preserve** the photograph in its current state against further degradation.

Consult the American Institute of Conservation website at <http://www.conservation-us.org> to find a trained conservator who can repair your photograph or document.



Further Reading

Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler & Diane Vogt-O'Connor.
Photographs: Archival Care and Management. Society
of American Archivists, 2006.





Whom to contact for further information:

Megan K. Friedel
mfriedel@uaa.alaska.edu
Archives & Special Collections, Consortium
Library,
University of Alaska Anchorage